

Legislation Reduces Funding for Efforts to Curb Oil Speculation

Thursday, June 16, 2011

Washington, D.C. – Congressman Ben Ray Luján of New Mexico's Third District voted today against a Republican spending bill that makes severe cuts to programs that provide food assistance to low-income mothers and children. The Fiscal Year 2012 Agriculture Appropriations bill also cuts funding for the agency charged with investigating the speculation and market manipulation in oil and gas markets that drive up the price of gas at the pump.

"Republicans continue to seek cuts to programs that assist the most vulnerable in our communities while calling for even more tax cuts for millionaires and billionaires," Congressman Luján said. "At a time when working families are struggling to put food on the table we should be investing in programs that help provide New Mexicans with the essentials they need to get through this difficult economic time."

The Republican Agriculture Appropriations bill cuts funding for the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program by \$650 million, denying food and health counseling for up to 350,000 low-income women and young children next year. It also includes cuts to food aid for low-income seniors through the Commodity Supplemental Food Program and help for food banks through the Emergency Food Assistance Program.

Under this spending bill, the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, the watchdog agency that polices market manipulation, is cut by 44 percent below the President's request. Goldman Sachs has estimated that speculation is adding as much as \$27 to the cost of a barrel of oil.

"Higher energy prices are squeezing New Mexico families, forcing them to pay more for essential items from the grocery store to the gas pump," Luján added. "Instead of standing with families on Main Street, Republicans are looking out for Wall Street speculators by cutting vital funding to the very agency responsible for cracking down on oil speculation."

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